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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 000745

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: BASESCU SENDS A SECOND PDL PRIME MINISTER NOMINEE
TO THE PARLIAMENT

REF: BUCHAREST 741

Classified By: DCM Jeri Guthrie-Corn for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (SBU) On Friday, 6 November 2009, President Traian Basescu announced the nomination of Democratic Liberal Party (PDL) vice chairman and popular Mayor of sector 3 of Bucharest, Liviu Negoita, for Prime Minister. The announcement came just one day after his first choice for a Prime Minister, Central Bank official Lucian Croitoru, was rejected by Parliament (REFTEL). The nomination followed two rounds of consultations with parliamentary parties, in which the National Liberal Party (PNL), Social Democratic Party (PSD), and Democratic Hungarian Union in Romania (UDMR) reiterated their endorsement of Sibiu Mayor Klaus Iohannis for Prime Minister.

¶2. (SBU) Negoita stated that he hopes to form a national-union cabinet made up of members from several political parties and has asked that all of the major parties meet with the goal of presenting a cabinet on Monday, 9 November. It remains doubtful that the parties will agree to a power-sharing agreement. If not, Negoita would have 10 days to propose a PDL-only Cabinet.

¶3. (SBU) Negoita, a 47-year-old lawyer, was recently re-elected in sector 3 with almost 80 percent of the vote and has been credited with revitalizing his part of the capital. Negoita surprised the PDL establishment by refusing Basescu's request to stand as the PDL candidate in the Election for General Mayor of Bucharest, a position superior to the mayors of the 6 sectors of the city, in June of 2008. That election was won by Independent Sorin Oprescu over PDL candidate Vasile Blaga.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: While both Basescu and Negoita made the case that a fully empowered political cabinet is necessary during this economic crisis, citing today's International Monetary Fund (IMF) announcement that the IMF would not disburse the next tranche of a much needed loan without an approved 2010 budget, the opposition parties believe that Basescu's real intent is to maintain the lame-duck Boc cabinet until after the presidential elections. Basescu allegedly views Negoita as responsible for the PDL's failure to capture the Bucharest Mayor's office due to his refusal to stand as the PDL candidate and to poor voter turn-out in his section. Polling showed that Negoita would have been a much stronger candidate than Blaga. Negoita probably accepted the nomination as Prime Minister because he was unwilling to incur Basescu's wrath by again refusing a presidential request. Negoita is likely to be rejected by the Parliament but could serve as a sacrificial lamb to Basescu's goal of re-election by boosting the President's appeal in Bucharest where PDL/CSOP polling shows that Basescu, a former Mayor of Bucharest, has lost ground to PNL candidate Crin Antonescu. END COMMENT.

GITENSTEIN